

Irish Prepped For DePaul

Written by Sean Stires
Friday, 01 February 2013 13:09



DePaul basketball is not what it once was in its glory days, but the Blue Demon program has shown signs of life in its two-plus seasons under head coach Oliver Purnell. The current edition of DePaul (10-10, 1-6 Big East) is on pace for at least a .500 overall finish - something that has not been done since the 2006-2007 campaign.

Notre Dame (17-4, 5-3) has won seven straight games over DePaul, including last year's 84-76 at Purcell Pavilion at the Joyce Center. The last time the Blue Demons beat the Irish came in that '06-'07 season. Irish head coach Mike Brey knows the series, which has been played 102 times previously, is one that is important to fans on both sides of the rivalry.

"Any time there's a lead-up to playing DePaul, whether it's here or over at All-State (Arena), fans in town, even this morning at breakfast, people are talking about DePaul games of the past and match-ups and things like that," Brey said this week. "I know it means a lot. "

Irish Prepped For DePaul

Written by Sean Stires

Friday, 01 February 2013 13:09

DePaul came into the week ranked third in the Big East averaging 73.2 points a game (just ahead of Notre Dame's 72.7 average). The Blue Demons struggle defensively though, allowing a conference-worst (15 teams) 71.4 points.

Notre Dame will try to take advantage of that, but to do it the Irish will have to contend with a full-court pressing defense that relies on speed and quickness.

"Our big guys are pretty darn good with the ball, but that will really be tested," Brey said of the challenge he expects to see Saturday when the Irish visit All-State Arena. "Having them be receivers at half court and having to make plays out of traps - I want them to be able to do that."

Repetitions during the week leading up to Saturday's game were emphasized in the scouting report. The bigger challenge in facing DePaul's pressure is the addition of Tom Knight to the starting line-up with Scott Martin out indefinitely due to knee problems. Knight has averaged 13.5 points in his two starts, but his ball handling could be put more to the test against DePaul than it was against South Florida and Villanova.

DePaul added a new dimension to its defense earlier this week when it employed more half court defense, including a 1-3-1 zone look, in a 79-74 overtime loss to St. John's Wednesday

Irish Prepped For DePaul

Written by Sean Stires

Friday, 01 February 2013 13:09

night. Brey knows he has to be ready for that possibility when the Irish possess the ball, but he also has to be ready for more pressure from the Demons on their home floor.

"In All-State they like to make it chaotic," Brey appraised. "Maybe on the road they backed it off a little bit. I think we have to be very prepared for them to trap, press and make it chaotic."

The Fighting Irish have been successful playing big men Knight and Jack Cooley together. Cooley has totaled 30 rebounds over the last two games with Knight's addition to the line-up.

"We feel if we can play the two bigs, maybe we can take advantage of getting on that offensive board and take advantage of the paint," Brey said.

Cooley is coming-off a 17-point, 16-rebound effort in Wednesday's 65-60 win over Villanova. It was his 13th double-double of the season, including his fourth in Big East play. The big man is averaging team-highs of 14.5 points and 11 rebounds through 21 games. DePaul is out-rebounded on average 39.6-37.5 through its 20 games.

Irish Prepped For DePaul

Written by Sean Stires

Friday, 01 February 2013 13:09

DePaul's leading scorer and rebounder is Cleveland Melvin, who was the Big East Rookie of the Year two years ago. The 6'8" junior forward averages 16.7 points and 7.8 rebounds per game. Junior guard Brandon Young, who like Melvin is from Baltimore, is tied with Melvin with a 16.7 scoring average.

Young is 20-for-64 (31%) on three-point tries this season, while Moses Morgan (7.3 points a game) is 27-for-85 (31%) from behind the arc.

Saturday's game tips-off at 2 p.m. ET and will be televised on ESPN2. Brey says he expects a good crowd on the road for the contest, because Notre Dame fans have traditionally turned out well when the Irish have played at All-State Arena.